

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05 MCT-01 /096 W
-----105359 151615Z /43

R 151508Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7284
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 974

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, WA, SF
SUBJ: NAMIBIA: ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL'S IMAGE

1. SUMMARY: RECENT ACTIONS BY THE ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL, INCLUDING PARTICULARLY THE DETENTION OF SWAPO LEADERS AND THIS REPUTED FAILURE TO ACT EFFECTIVELY AGAINST ALLEGED INTIMIDATION OF SWANU SUPPORTERS, HAVE DAMAGED HIS IMAGE. WE SHOULD URGE THE SAG AND STEYN HIMSELF TO TAKE EFFECTIVE REMIDIAL ACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. OVER THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS, ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL STEYN'S REPUTATION FOR IMPARTIALITY HAS SLIPPED. HIS DETENTION IN RECENT WEEKS OF MOST OF SWAPO'S LEADERS
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REMAINING IN THE COUNTRY (CAPE TOWN 828, 890, 952) HAS OF COURSE BEEN THE MAJOR DAMAGING ACT, PERHAPS MITIGATED SLIGHTLY IF AT ALL BY HIS RECENT DETENTION OF TWO OBSCURE DTA HEREROS (CAPE TOWN 952).

3. IN THE UNIQUE SITUATION IN WHICH SWAPO IS A LEGAL INTERNAL PARTY AS WELL AS A SELF-AVOWED GUERRILLA GROUPP

ATTEMPTING TO OVERTHROW SOUTH AFRICAN ADMINISTRATION, THE AG WAS ABLE TO MAINTAIN A MORE OR LESS FORMAL IMPARTIALITY TOWARD ALL POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE TERRITORY SO LONG AS HE DID NOT HAVE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY. THUS, WHILE IT WOULD NOT BE UNEXPECTED IF SOME OF THE DETAINED INTERNAL SWAPO LEADERS WERE LINKED TO OR HAD KNOWLEDGE OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY, ACTION BY STEYN AS DISTINCT FROM ACTION BY THE SAG, HAS PUT HIM IN THE POSITION OF A SWAPO ADVERSARY.

4. UNTIL RECENTLY, STEYN ALSO CONTRAINED HIS PUBLIC CRITICISM OF SWAPO. ALTHOUGH HE OCCASIONALLY CALLED ON THE ORGANIZATION TO STOP ITS VIOLENCE AND TO ACCEPT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, HE AVOIDED PREJUDGING ITS ULTIMATE INTENTIONS. THE AG'S PERSONAL FEAR OF AND DISTASTE FOR SWAPO MAY, HOWEVER, BE SURFACING. IN A MAY 9 SPEECH IN WINDHOEK, STEYN REPORTEDLY NOTED HE WAS AMONG THE TOP FIVE ON SWAPO'S ASSASSINATION LIST. PREVIOUSLY, STEYN HAD PUBLICLY DECLINED TO COMMENT ON THE MAY 4 RAID INTO ANGOLA, BUT IN THIS SAME SPEECH HE REPORTEDLY SAID THE ANGOLAN OPERATION BY THE SAG WAS INTENDED TO PREVENT A "MASSIVE MILITARY ASSAULT ON THIS TERRITORY AND ITS PEOPLE. HE CITED SWAPO DOCUMENTS CAPTURED IN THE RECENT ANGOLAN RAID AS "UNDENIABLE PROOF" THAT SWAPO INTENDS TO PURSUE A VIOLENT SOLUTION, AND

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REPORTEDLY WARNED THAT SWAPO WOULD BE "HIT AND HIT AGAIN" UNTIL IT SHOWED ITS WILLINGNESS TO PURSUE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

5. WHILE SWAPO HAS FROM THE OUTSET DISMISSED THE AG AS A SOUTH AFRICAN STOOGE, THERE HAS BEEN RECENT DISENCHANTMENT WITH STEYN AMONG SOME OTHER GROUPS. THE NNF LEADERS IN DISCUSSIONS WITH US HAVE QUESTIONED STEYN'S IMPARTIALITY LARGELY AS A RESULT OF HIS REPUTED INACTION IN THE FACT OF THEIR APPEALS TO HIM TO ACT AGAINST ALLEGED INTIMIDATION BY TURNHALLE ELEMENTS OF SWANU SUPPORTERS (CAPE TOWN 951). IN ADDITION, NNF LEADERS AND SOME LOCAL JOURNALISTS PERCEIVE STEYN AS ON CLOSER PERSONAL TERMS WITH DTA LEADERS THAN THOSE OF OTHER GROUPS. THE PERCEPTION OF A CLOSE LINK BETWEEN THE AG AND THE DTA IS ALSO REINFORCED BY THE FACT THAT THE DTA OFTEN ATTEMPTS TO CLAIM CREDIT FOR MANY OF STEYN'S ACTIONS SUCH AS ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 974

6. THE AG HAS ALSO HAD HIS TROUBLES WITH THE EXTREME RIGHT WING, INCLUDING A NUMBER OF PUBLIC BRUSHES WITH THE NATIONAL PARTY AND AKTUR. A.H. DU PLESSIS AND STEYN HAVE OVER THE LAST WEEK PUBLICLY CRITICIZED EACH OTHER OVER STEYN'S DECISION TO DISBAND PRIVATE BUILDING SOCIETIES AND CREATE A STATE HOUSING CORPORATION (PRETORIA SEPTEL). EBEN VAN ZIJL TOLD US PRIVATELY ON MAY 9 THAT THE AG'S ACTIONS IN GENERAL TENDED TO FAVOR DTA ABOVE OTHER GROUPS.

7. AN OFFICIAL IN STEYN'S OFFICE ACKNOWLEDGED TO US PRIVATELY THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THE GROWING PERCEPTION OF PARTIALITY ON THE PART OF THE AG. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE AG IS "CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE." HE
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SAID THAT SINCE SWAPO DOES NOT RECOGNIZE THE AG AND AKTUR IS OPPOSED IN PRINCIPLE TO THE SITUATION HE IS TRYING TO CREATE, IT IS ONLY NATURAL THAT HE HAS

BECOME MORE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED IN THE PUBLIC EYE WITH
THE GROUP THT MOST SUPPORTS HIS DECISIONS.

8. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH STEYN'S PROCLAMATION AG 26 IS
CONSIDERABLY LESS RIGOROUS THAN THE SAG'S TERRORISM
AND INTERNAL SECURITY ACTS, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT IN THE
LONGER TERM LESS DAMAGE WOULD HAVE BEEN DONE TO STEYN AND
THUS TO THE WESTERN SETTLEMENT EFFORT IF THE SWAPO OFFICIALS HAD
BEEN DETAINED BY THE SAG. THE CONTACT GROUP
MAY WISH TO CONSIDER INCLUDING IN OUR NEXT APPROACH TO
THE SAG THE POINT THAT ANY DETENTIONS WITHOUT CHARGE,
WHETHER OF SWAPO OR NON-SWAPO PERSONNEL,
UNDERMINES THE PRESTIGE AND IMPARTIALITY OF THE AG.
WE SUGGEST URGING THAT THE AG RELEASE ALL THOSE DETAINED UNDER
AG 26, INCLUDING THE TWO HEREROS, UNLESS CHARGES CAN BE
BROUGHT AGAINST THEM. THE SLIPPAGE IN THE AG'S IMAGE
AMONG NON-SWAPO AND NON-DTA ELEMENTS IN NAMIBIA
UNDERScores THE NEED FOR THE CONTACT GROUP TO STRESS
NOT ONLY TO THE SAG BUT TO STEYN AS WELL, THE CRITICAL
IMPORTANCE OF HIS BUILDING AN IMAGE OF IMPARTIALITY.
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